



Blessing Bags Help the Homeless

Raleigh, North Carolina

Blessing bags (small giveaway packages of toiletries and useful items for homeless people) are a wonderful project, whether done on a small family basis, as a local chapter event, or on a larger scale like the 2019 NPM Convention in Raleigh.

Here's how we did it in Raleigh: First, we identified a distribution center. Oak City Cares is a central location that coordinates services across a wide spectrum and has a grasp on what is needed in the community. Most urban areas have similar organizations that can give ideas on desirable items to add to your blessing bag. Typically, small size toiletries like shampoo, hand lotion, combs, and dental hygiene items are welcome, as are tissues, candy, socks, and the like. Depending on the time of year, gloves and toboggan style hats can be especially welcome. Band-Aids and antibiotic ointment are a good idea, too.

The Core Committee in Raleigh turned to local parishes and asked them to hold drives for specific items. One parish collected combs, several collected white athletic-style socks, etc. Dental hygiene kits were donated by a dental supply company, and prayer cards came from a local funeral home. In our experience, once people heard about the project, they were excited to be a part of it. We decided gallon-sized plastic bags with a zip closure were the ideal container. (The bags could provide a dry place for homeless friends to store any essential documents.)

Our chairperson for this endeavor was key: her dedication to detail and ability to recruit helpers made it the great success it was (over 1,200 bags assembled in less than 45 minutes). Obviously, a smaller project is less work to organize, but all efforts are important to the recipients.

Lastly, thanking the parishes for their support was important. Just a note in the weekly bulletin letting folks know how many lives were touched by their thoughtfulness was our final task.

– Lynn Brugnolotti, Raleigh core team